

# CALVET

## California Department of Veterans Affairs

*"You Served Your Nation, Let Us Serve You"*

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## HOT NEWS

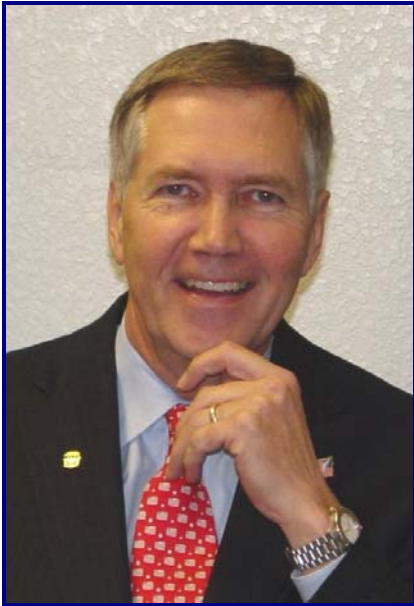
### Governor Signs Much Needed Legislation Benefiting Veterans

Secretary Johnson praises Governor Schwarzenegger for recognizing the needs of today's veterans by signing legislation that acknowledges their many contributions to our nation. In a recent announcement from his office, Governor Schwarzenegger announced he has signed SB 1401 by Senator Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto) and AB 3083 by the Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs. These measures will extend mental health services to veterans and assist veterans in getting screened for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury.

"Governor Schwarzenegger has once more demonstrated his commitment to our nation's heroes, our veterans," said Tom Johnson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "By signing these bills, the governor is responding to the special needs of veterans and their families."

The Governor also signed SB 1675 by Senator Dave Cox (R-Fair Oaks), which provides that a Resolution of Issuance approved by the Veterans' Debenture Finance Committee may give the Department of Veterans Affairs the discretion to structure the terms and conditions of any issuance of Revenue Bonds for the CalVet Home Loan Program, thereby reducing costs.

Also, recently, the Governor signed SB 1455 by Senator Dave Cogdill (R-Modesto), which authorizes the creation of the Gold Star Family License Plate and allows a family member of a member of the U.S. Armed Forces killed on active duty to apply for the plate containing a gold star and the words "Gold Star Family." As a token of the state's appreciation for their sacrifice, the bill provides a special waiver of fees for Gold Star Families.



*“Overall, the team at CalVet is committed to the mission and excited about the opportunities that present themselves every day to do the best job we can for veterans and their families.”*

*Tom Johnson*

## Message from the Secretary

### The Three Legged Stool:

Growing up in rural Minnesota, I saw many three legged stools. They were used by the farmers to sit on while they milked the cows. The stool went the way of the typewriter, as more milking machines came into use, but the three legged stool image has remained.

At CalVet some could think of our services as a three legged stool; Veterans Homes, the CalVet Loan program and Veterans Services. Those are the three main divisions or “commands” and the rest of the Department is there to support them as they deliver services.

This past year has seen significant progress for all three of our “legs,” beginning with our oldest one, the Veterans Homes. In Barstow, we have re-instituted our Skilled Nursing Unit and the census is up to 10. In Chula Vista, we have begun the repairs on all of the showers and augmented the budget to address other maintenance needs. At Yountville, the Pathway Home program is seeing great growth and meeting with outstanding success. We also have many construction projects underway including the complete renovation of the Member Services Building.

As for the new homes, the construction is progressing rapidly and we are beginning the countdown to the openings of the Pete Knight Veterans Home in Lancaster and the Veterans Home in Ventura. The Fresno and Redding veterans homes projects have had a schedule set-back but those projects remain on the front burner for a construction start in late 2009. All in all, taking care of over 1,500 residents is both a privilege and an honor which our staff is carrying out on a day-to-day basis with great skill and compassion.

The second oldest “leg” is the CalVet Home Loan Program. What a great year they have had in finally securing passage of federal legislation that opens the door of the Qualified Veterans Mortgage Bonds (QVMB) loans to our younger veterans. The final key to the puzzle will be the passage of Proposition 12 on the November ballot, and if the voters approve this measure, as they have approved all of the previous 26, then we can serve an additional 3,600 veterans.

Our CalVet program is as solid as a rock with great customer satisfaction, top-notch credit ratings and terrific service. We hold the contracts so that the customer, our veterans, can always deal directly with CalVet. We provide a complete array of insurance products at very attractive rates and our interest rates are consistently below the market. In these financially troubled times, the CalVet Home Loan program stands tall, strong and independent with the added plus that it does not impact the State’s General Fund.

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## USDVA Briefs

### VA SECRETARY ESTABLISHES ALS AS A PRESUMPTIVE COMPENSABLE ILLNESS

#### *Cites Association between Military Service and Later Development of ALS*

Veterans with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) may receive badly-needed support for themselves and their families after the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today that ALS will become a presumptively compensable illness for all veterans with 90 days or more of continuously active service in the military.

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1583>



### VA ANNOUNCES 10 NATIONAL SPONSORS FOR NEW SPORTS CLINIC

Affairs (VA) announced today 10 sponsors are supporting VA's newest rehabilitative event for injured veterans, the National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic.

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1589>



### VA, DOD ELECTRONICALLY "HAND OFF" RECORDS OF WOUNDED PATIENTS

Instant electronic medical information from the Department of Defense (DoD) about severely wounded troops soon will be transferred to four Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) special treatment centers. The two departments completed a successful pilot project sharing patient information between Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the Polytrauma Unit at the Tampa, Fla., VA Medical Center.

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1587>



### NATIONAL VETERANS' ART FESTIVAL COMING TO RIVERSIDE IN OCTOBER

More than 120 veterans from across the country who are medal winners in national creative writing, music, dance, drama or visual arts competitions are preparing to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Riverside, Calif., from Oct. 20-26.

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1586>

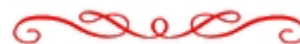


### VA ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO THE DISABILITY RATING SCHEDULE FOR TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES AND BURN SCARS

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced

changes in the way VA will evaluate traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and burn scars for purposes of determining the appropriate level of compensation veterans receive for these injuries.

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1582>

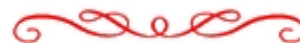


### VA LOANS REMAIN A STRONG OPTION FOR VETERANS

#### *Agency Sees Significant Increase in Loan Volume over Past Year*

More servicemembers and veterans are using their Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) home loan guaranty benefit, as VA's loan program remains a strong option in today's housing market.

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1573>



### VA SUICIDE PREVENTION PANEL COMPLETES DRAFT REPORT

#### *Group Lauds VA's Comprehensive Strategy*

A blue-ribbon panel has praised the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for its "comprehensive strategy" in suicide prevention that includes a "number of initiatives and innovations that hold great promise for preventing suicide attempts and completions."

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1566>



### VA OPENING 10 RURAL OUTREACH CLINICS

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will open 10 new Rural Outreach Clinics by 2009 to increase the convenience of care for thousands of veterans living in rural areas.

Scheduled to begin operation this October are facilities in:

- Houston County, Ga.;
- Juneau County, Alaska; and
- Wasco County, Ore.

Clinics to be operational by August 2009 are in:

- Winnemucca, Nev.;
- **Yreka, Calif.;**
- Utuado, Puerto Rico;
- Lagrange, Texas;
- Montezuma Creek, Utah; and
- Manistique, Mich.

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1567>



## 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Captain Paul C. Alaniz CACI Golf Tournament Eagles for Vets

*ETS group recognized by Secretary of California Department of Veteran Affairs for efforts*

By Lawana Godwin

Thanks to the generous support of CACI Oxnard employees and the community, the Enterprise Technologies and Services (ETS) group is thrilled to report that the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Captain Paul Alaniz CACI Golf Tournament was a huge success! Continuing to grow, this year the tournament raised \$11,500.00 to benefit the new Veterans Home of California Greater Los Angeles/Ventura County (GLAVC).

Tom Johnson, Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs hand delivered a Certificate of Appreciation to the group noting that the significant funds raised by the golf tournament would be put to good use by the Veterans Home.

Johnson said, "Our team at the State Department of Veterans Affairs is excited to see the great support we have received from the business and veterans community of Ventura County as we get ever closer to completing the construction and opening our State Veterans Home. The added amenities we can bring to veterans served by the Home come from the support of the community and through events such as the one recently sponsored by CACI and we look forward to more such events in the future."



Photo by Lawana Godwin

**Kevin Bradley, Dave Elliott, Greg Pineda, and Evan Hunt Aimed High at 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Capt. Paul C. Alaniz CACI Golf Tournament**



Photo by Lawana Godwin

**Under Secretary Roger Brautigan with CACI executives Scotty McRoberts, Sinmo Lee and Rodney Kendall raised their clubs to support the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Captain Paul C. Alaniz CACI Golf Tournament.**

The Veterans Home of California is a residential facility that employs a dedicated therapeutic community that provides required support to allow and encourage members to live quality lives. The new facility is under construction in Saticoy.

### Fees Raise Funds for Entertaining Equipment

Funds raised from the golf tournament purchased two Nintendo Wii game consoles, two flat screen TVs, BBQ equipment, a Foosball table, a pool/ping pong table, and magazine subscriptions. The tournament was held at the River Ridge Golf Club on June 27, 2008. Each year a different branch of the armed forces is honored and this year's theme readily reflected the branch. "Aim High – U.S. Air Force" provided all the impetus participants and employees needed.

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## 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Captain Paul C. Alaniz CACI Golf Tournament Eagles for Vets cont:

CACI software engineers Greg Pineda, Kevin Bradley, Evan Hunt and Dave Elliott "Aimed High," finishing with a scorecard to prove it! The foursome said, "It was great to see the new Ventura County Veterans Home breaking ground. Team CACI also tried to break ground on the course maybe next year teeing the ball higher will help! Supporting our Veterans is an outstanding cause."

### Oxnard Employees Honored to Help

Many raffle prizes were donated by CACI Oxnard employees. Christine Penza said, "Being able to contribute was important to me because I also served and felt that continuing to support our troops whether retired or active duty was something I wanted to do."

Roger Brautigan, MGEN, USA (Ret.) and Under Secretary of California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA) played in the tournament and stated, "The contributions from all of you to the Ventura Veterans Home this year – and in the future – will have significant, lasting impact on the quality of life for Home members and adult day care health participants. We can't thank you enough for your generosity and support of California's 2.1 million veterans."

CDVA VetFund Executive Director Ron Brand said, "The CDVA is pleased with the support that we see from the Ventura County community. Groups like CACI are leading the way."

Denise Kendall, Golf Committee chairperson said, "It gave me great pleasure and pride as a CACI employee to support the new Veterans Home. I am a strong advocate for our Vets and believe the funds we raised will benefit them much more than ever before. The CACI Golf Committee is outstanding. They worked so hard to make the tournament the 'best of the best.' We are 100 percent committed to our Veterans."

For more information about the Captain Paul C. Alaniz CACI Golf Tournament or help a facility to start one in your area, contact Denise Kendall, [dkendall@caci.com](mailto:dkendall@caci.com).

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## Message from the Secretary cont:

And finally, in our Veterans Services division we have reinvigorated the mission with an added focus on outreach, connecting the dots with many organizations who are serving veterans and developing stronger relationships with our colleagues in state government as we focus on mental health issues, jobs and education for our California veterans.

Overall, the team at CalVet is committed to the mission and excited about the opportunities that present themselves every day to do the best job we can for veterans and their families. Sure, the state has a budget problem and revenues are down, and CalVet has to be part of the solution as we examine our expenses and look at ways to be more efficient as well as effective. This year will truly be a challenging one but with a good team effort and good relationships, services and support from our many partners, the 2.1 million veterans in California will be well-served by all three of the department's legs.

**Tom Johnson**  
**Secretary**



## Barstow Home Members Shine at Golden Age Games

Five residents from the Veterans Home of California-Barstow participated in the 22<sup>nd</sup> National Veterans Golden Age Games in Indianapolis, Indiana from August 20-24, 2008.

Thanks to our coaches, Christina Barnes, Standards Compliance Coordinator and Della Allomong, Volunteer; the games this year were a great success for our team as we were able to bring home five medals. Participants in the games included:

Harry Hay: Horse Shoes and Bowling

Walter Kotowski : Horse Shoes, Shuffleboard (*Bronze medal*), Table Tennis (*Bronze medal*)

Charles Ross: 9-Ball and Swimming (*Bronze medal*)

Mike Stofira: Horse Shoes (*Gold medal*) and 9-Ball (*Bronze medal*) and Swimming

Glenn "Smokey" Yokum: Checkers

Prior to leaving for the Indiana games the Home sponsored a Pep Rally for the guys. Our Administrator, Jaime Todd, and the Mayor of the city of Barstow, Lawrence Dale, as well as the sponsors that so graciously provided funding to allow our athletes to attend this event, attended the Rally.

The festivities continued upon their return. A tailgate party was enjoyed by all and, once again, the Mayor and sponsors were there to welcome our heroes home.



*Team Barstow  
National Veterans Golden Age Games*



*Glenn "Smokey" Yokum*



# The Benefits of Active Listening

Provided by Lucinda Ford, Speech Pathologist II  
Yountville Veterans Home

Communication takes place all the time. It is an important aspect of who we are as individuals and a community. Communication includes talking, sign language, AAC, gestures and other non-verbal forms of communication. What we often forget to remember is that **LISTENING** is a huge part of the communication process. Active listening is a way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding and trust. It is a valuable skill, as it enables the listener to receive and accurately interpret the speaker's message, and then provide an appropriate response. The response is an important part of the listening process. We all want to be able to communicate, listen, and be understood. Here are some helpful tips on how to be a good listener.

1. Be attentive. Be interested. Be alert and not distracted. Create a positive atmosphere through non-verbal behavior.
2. Be a sounding board – allows the speaker to bounce ideas and feelings off you while assuming a nonjudgmental, non-critical manner.
3. Don't ask a lot of questions. That can give the impression you are "grilling" the speaker.
4. Act like a mirror – reflect back what you think the speaker is saying and feeling.
5. Don't discount the speaker's feelings by using stock phrases like "It's not that bad," or "You'll feel better tomorrow."
6. Don't let the speaker "hook" you. This can happen if you get angry or upset, allow yourself to get involved in an argument, or pass judgment on the other person.
7. Indicate you are listening by
  - Providing brief, noncommittal acknowledging responses, e.g., "Uh-huh," or "I see."
  - Giving nonverbal acknowledgements, e.g., head nodding, facial expressions matching the speaker, open and relaxed body expression, eye contact.
  - Invitations to say more, e.g., "Tell me about it," or "I'd like to hear about that."
8. Follow good listening "ground rules:"
  - Don't interrupt.
  - Don't change the subject or move in a new direction.
  - Don't rehearse in your own head.
  - Don't interrogate.
  - Don't teach.
  - Don't give advice.
  - **Do** reflect back to the speaker what you understand and how you think the speaker feels.

\*These guidelines for empathetic listening were provided by Madelyn Burley-Allen from the website [beyondintractability.org](http://beyondintractability.org)

## The Vietnam Veterans of America, California State Council and CalVet, Mark 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial with 5-Day Celebration and Commemorative Medallion

The Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), California State Council and the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) will mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Capitol Park with 5 days of activities. This celebration coincides with the recognition of December 10 through 14, 2008, as "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Week." This week, established by Assembly Concurrent Resolution 151 (Cook), commemorates the vital contributions and sacrifices of all members of the United States Armed Forces who served in the Vietnam War.

The celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial will begin on December 10 with the reading of the names of all 5,822 Californians who gave their lives in defense of our country during the Vietnam War. On December 13, 2008 there will be a parade and ceremony and the 20-year anniversary celebration will end on December 14, 2008 with a sunrise POW/MIA ceremony held at the Memorial. All veterans are invited to attend.

To help offset the cost of this ambitious celebration, the VVA, California State Council, is offering commemorative medallions at a cost of \$15 each.

To purchase these medallions online via PayPal, go to <http://www.cavbf.org/20thanniversaryproducts.html>. Interested parties can also purchase these commemorative medallions directly from the VVA by contacting the Sacramento Chapter 500 at 916-481-6020.

For more information regarding the celebration, contact the VVA at [CAVietnamMemorial@yahoo.com](mailto:CAVietnamMemorial@yahoo.com).



### Veterans Homes Statistics as of September 30, 2008

	Chula Vista	Barstow	Yountville
Domiciliary	135	106	655
Residential Care for the Elderly	29		41
Skilled Nursing	157	9	173
Intermediate Care		54	134
Acute Care			2
Memory Care			40



## GLAVC BRIEF

### Topping Off Ceremony Marks Construction Milestone of the West Los Angeles Veterans Home

On Thursday, September 18, the California Departments of Veterans Affairs and General Services, in conjunction with URS Corporation Construction Services, held a "Topping Off" ceremony to mark a significant milestone in the construction of the long-awaited Veterans Home of California, West Los Angeles.

Together with the Veterans Homes of California in Lancaster and Ventura, also under construction, the West Los Angeles Veterans Home comprises the Greater Los Angeles Ventura Counties project, a substantial project designed to help address the need to care for aged and disabled military veterans.

#### A "Topping Off" Ceremony:

In building construction, topping off, is a ceremony held when the last beam is placed at the top of a building. The term may also refer to the overall completion of the building's structure. A "topping off" ceremony is usually held to commemorate the event. State and local officials, project designers, contractors, and workers come together for this "topping off" ceremony. Construction of the West Los Angeles, Lancaster, and Ventura Veterans Homes continues on schedule with projected openings in December of 2009 for Lancaster and Ventura, and December 2010 for West Los Angeles.



## PIX FROM THE BARSTOW AND CHULA VISTA VETERANS HOMES



Ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new  
Rose Garden Café  
at the Chula Vista Veterans Home



New sod being put down at the  
Barstow Veterans Home



Chula Vista Veterans Home members  
enjoy a meal at the Rose Garden Café



The Skilled Nursing Facility Lobby at  
the Barstow Veterans Home

## CalVet News

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## H O M E   L O A N S

**Veterans: You may be eligible for a 30-Year Home Loan.**

**For more information contact CalVet at  
[www.calvet.ca.gov/calvetloans](http://www.calvet.ca.gov/calvetloans) or call**

**866-653-2510**

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